

Wilmington Education Advisory Committee

STRENGTHENING WILMINGTON EDUCATION: AN INTERIM REPORT

January 26, 2015

Wilmington Education Advisory Committee

Members

Tony Allen, Ph.D., Chairperson, Civic Leader, and Bank of America Senior Executive
Norma Ivonne Antongiorgi, Charter Board Member, La Academia Antonia Alonso and Retired Wilmington Teacher
The Honorable James Baker, Former Mayor of the City of Wilmington and Chairman of Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League
Rosemary Banks, Retired Wilmington Teacher
Adriana Bohm, Ph.D., Wilmington Parent and Red Clay School Board Member
Melissa Browne, Wilmington Parent and Pre-K Lead Planner, Relay Graduate School of Education
Nikki Castle, Ph.D., Research Evaluator and Founder of Thomas Edison Charter School
The Honorable Nnamdi Chukwuocha, Education Committee Chair, Wilmington City Council
Karen Eller, Fourth Grade Teacher, Bancroft Elementary School
The Reverend Meredith Griffin, D.Min., Education Committee Chair, Interdenominational Ministers Action Council
Henry Harper, Ph.D., Retired District Superintendent and Former Wilmington Campus Director, Delaware State University
Susan Hessling, Teacher, Warner Elementary School
Elizabeth Lockman, Wilmington Parent and Community Advocate
Chandra Pitts, Wilmington Parent and Executive Director, One Village Alliance
Marco Ramos, Program Coordinator, Latin American Community Center
Richard “Mouse” Smith, President, Delaware NAACP
Shefon Taylor, Wilmington Parent and Public Allies Alumna
Cheryl Trawick, Retired Wilmington Administrator
Meghan Wallace, Former Special Education Teacher
Shelia Wyatt, Retired Wilmington Teacher

Counselor

Dan Rich, Ph.D., Professor of Public Policy and Senior Public Policy Fellow at the Institute for Public Administration (IPA), University of Delaware (UD)

Research Analysts

Elizabeth Burland, Research Assistant, IPA, UD
Neil Kirschling, Research Assistant, IPA, UD and Program Officer, Rodel Foundation
Lisa Moreland, Associate Policy Scientist, IPA, UD
Sarah Pragg, Policy Specialist, IPA, UD
Kelly Sherretz, Associate Policy Scientist, IPA, UD

Wilmington Education Historical Timeline¹

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1897 | Separate educational system is encoded in 1897 constitution. |
| 1921 | Delaware General Assembly (GA) requires separate but equal schools; 50 separate school districts operate in the state. |
| 1954 | <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> ; desegregation ordered, but compliance is limited. |
| 1956 | <i>Evans v. Buchanan</i> first brought to court; court orders desegregation, but implementation is delayed. |
| 1957 | U.S. District Court requires Delaware to develop a comprehensive desegregation plan. |
| 1965 | State Board of Education (SBOE) adopts resolution to close smaller schools and phase out the last "black school district." |
| 1968 | GA passes Education Advancement Act, consolidates smaller districts (Wilmington excluded), and provides equalization funding. |
| 1971 | Education Advancement Act is challenged in Supreme Court; <i>Evans v. Buchanan</i> reopened. |
| 1974 | U.S. District Court decides Wilmington schools are segregated; Education Advancement Act declared unconstitutional. |
| 1976 | <i>Evans v. Buchanan</i> ; court mandated inter-district busing, upheld through repeated appeals. |
| 1978 | "9-3" busing school desegregation plan is implemented. |
| 1980-1981 | Delaware GA passes law prompting SBOE to create four districts in New Castle County; court upholds. |
| 1980-1990s | Sustained pressure to desegregate districts in Delaware, but also gradual loosening of desegregation standards nationally. |
| 1993 | State of Delaware requests unitary status for four districts; U.S. District Court assents (1995). |
| 1995-1996 | Court-ordered federal supervision of desegregation ends; busing continues largely unchanged. |

¹ Hoff, S. (2007, August 14). Delaware's constitution and its impact on education.
 Eccel, J. (2012, April 1). History of public education in Delaware during past 50 years.

Wilmington Education Historical Timeline, cont.

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|-------------|--|
| 1995 | GA formally amends state constitution to abolish separate education system. |
| 1996 | Delaware School Choice Program approved (partly a response to busing). |
| 1996 | Delaware GA passes legislation allowing charter schools. |
| 1998 | Wilmington High School closes as a traditional school and building reopens with a magnet school (Cab Calloway School of the Arts) and a charter school (Charter School of Wilmington). |
| 2000 | Neighborhood Schools Act dramatically reduces busing. |
| 2001 | Report mandated by Neighborhood Schools Act titled "They Matter Most," is released; recommendations are made with no action. |
| 2006 | Coalition of government, education, business, and community leaders establish Vision 2015 and release plan to develop world-class public education for Delaware. |
| 2006 | Hope Commission Report is produced and a new nonprofit is created; recommendations are made with no action. |
| 2008 | Wilmington Education Task Force convened by Senator Margaret Rose Henry; recommendations are made with no action. |
| 2013 | Mayor's Youth, Education and Citizenship Strategic Planning Team established but issued no formal report. |
| 2014 | Governor Markell creates the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee. |

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Executive Summary

The Wilmington Education Advisory Committee was mandated by Executive Order to recommend how to strengthen public education for all Wilmington students. The Advisory Committee represents a cross-section of the Wilmington community and has focused on promoting the long-term best interests of Wilmington's students. While we have vigorously debated the efficacy of public education in Wilmington, we have shared expectations and agree on the following guiding principles.

- ***The effectiveness of Wilmington public education is critical to our entire state; strengthening Wilmington public education will strengthen Delaware.***
- ***All Wilmington schools should set and meet high standards for student learning and there should be agreed upon measures for student success that apply to all schools.***
- ***Wilmington students should continue to be served by a combination of district, charter, and vo-tech schools.***
- ***All Wilmington schools should receive the human and financial resources needed to support student success.***
- ***Policies and practices for Wilmington schools should promote collaboration, shared learning, and a mutual commitment to improvements that serve all students.***
- ***Wilmington schools should be supported as community assets, governed in some way by the community they serve.***
- ***Wilmington schools should have allies to address the complex challenges of educating the city's children. These allies include engaged families, community and business partners, early childhood educators, mental and physical health providers, institutions of higher education, and service providers from all levels of government and from the private and nonprofit sectors.***

The Advisory Committee has focused on four key issues: 1) creating responsive governance, 2) meeting Wilmington student needs, 3) funding student success, and 4) implementing change. These are issues of broad and urgent community concern, and they are critical to strengthening the overall quality of public education in Wilmington. After reviewing earlier reports, meeting with Wilmington community, education, and governmental leaders, and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of many options, the Advisory Committee developed the action agenda described in this Interim Report. Before the final action agenda is presented to Governor Jack Markell and the General Assembly, the Advisory Committee will solicit input on its interim recommendations from the Delaware community, and especially from the families, citizens, and leaders of Wilmington (see **Opportunity for Public Comments** section for details).

Creating Responsive Governance

The governance of Wilmington public education is fragmented and dysfunctional. More coherent and responsive governance requires actions on three fronts.

1. Traditional school districts operating in Wilmington should have a more streamlined configuration that better supports continuous improvement and community responsiveness.

- The Christina and Colonial School Districts should no longer serve Wilmington. The Red Clay Consolidated, Brandywine, and New Castle County Vocational-Technical (NCC Vo-tech) School Districts should continue to serve Wilmington children. Red Clay should take responsibility for all Wilmington schools currently under Christina.

2. Charter schools should be guided by a new vision of responsibility for the overall effectiveness of public education that promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices among all Wilmington schools.

- Governor Markell should call for a strategic plan for charter schools that includes the desired number and mix of traditional, charter, and vo-tech schools. No new charter school or expansion of an existing charter school in Wilmington or New Castle County should be authorized until the plan has been accepted.
- Wilmington charter schools should form a citywide consortium that includes all charter schools and promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices.

3. The Wilmington community and its city government should be engaged partners in the governance of Wilmington public education.

- The Advisory Committee endorses the plan of the City of Wilmington to create an Office of Education and Public Policy.

Meeting Wilmington Student Needs

The needs of students in poverty must be addressed through stronger alignment of needed supports and services starting in early childhood and extending through entry into a career or higher education.

- The State should use its existing policy infrastructure to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the integration of services for low-income children and families, and for schools with high concentrations of poverty. The plan should include recommendations for redirecting current state funding.
- Existing public, private, and nonprofit institutions and investments should be mobilized to carry out key facets of the state plan. These include the State's Interagency Resource Management Committee, the Delaware and Wilmington Early Childhood Councils, community institutions (such as Nemours, United Way of Delaware, Children and Families) and business partners (such as State and New Castle County Chambers of Commerce).
- The city government's proposed Office of Education and Public Policy should play a lead role in strengthening parent engagement in student learning, advocating for

students with special needs, and mobilizing community support for Wilmington schools. The Office should be funded and operated by the City of Wilmington.

Funding Student Success

Strengthening Wilmington education requires funding adjustments in four areas: 1) an allocation of funds to schools with high concentrations of students in poverty; 2) an improved revenue base to support the overall costs of public education; 3) transitional resources to effectively implement district realignment; and, 4) funds for early childhood and other programs needed to meet the needs of low-income students.

- The governor and state legislature should approve a weighted student funding formula or a modification to the current unit count formula that incorporates allocations for schools with high concentrations of students in poverty and English language learners, and that expands special education status to grades K–3.
- The resource base supporting public education must be strengthened at both the state and local levels. After 30 years of inaction, property reassessment needs to be implemented without further delay and be undertaken on a regular schedule that reflects national best practices.
- Funding adjustments must be made to support the cost of district reconfiguration.

Implementing Change

A broadly representative, cross-sector Commission, outside of the current agencies of state government, should lead the planning and implementation of the recommendations in this report.

- The governor and state legislature should establish the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC) to oversee implementation and to advise on additional policy and program improvements to strengthen Wilmington education. The commission should be an independent body operating outside of the Department of Education and should report to the governor and state legislature annually. The commission should sunset after five years.

A Time to Act

Despite 40 years of reforms, thousands of Wilmington children, most of them poor, black, or Latino, still do not have access to high-quality public education. Judged on most outcomes—test scores, truancy, graduation rates, college attendance, socio-emotional well-being, drug use, homelessness, arrests, and unemployment—these children have become data points for a system of failure. Various groups address these challenges by blaming each other; government officials, parents, educational advocates, community and business leaders, unions, educational administrators, teachers, and, at times, even the children themselves are blamed for the failures of public education. This confrontational dialogue, which has generally focused on how one group can hold another group accountable, is now an embedded feature of Wilmington education.

Recently, the level of confrontation has escalated. Governor Jack Markell and Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy have challenged two districts to accept plans to transform six low-performing, urban schools. The American Civil Liberties Union has filed with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights claiming that the state's charter law has re-segregated Wilmington schools. Wilmington Mayor Dennis P. Williams has filed suit against the State of Delaware to hold open the Moyer Academic Institute, a charter school deemed by the Delaware Department of Education to be failing its students. The board of Reach Academy for Girls, another charter school faced with closure, has sued the State of Delaware for the right to continue. And in the not so distant background, Wilmington has attracted unwanted national attention for its level of violent crime, much of which can be attributed to former students for which the public education system was never prepared and ultimately failed.

Despite the allegations and confrontations that now typify Wilmington education, the simple and undeniable historical fact is that our entire Delaware community is responsible for the conditions that currently exist. Only the entire community, acting together, will change these conditions, and even then it will not be easy. High-quality education is a pathway out of poverty, but making that pathway available to all students requires the commitment of our entire community expressed through intentional and comprehensive changes supported by policy, resources, and political will.

It is a time to act. It is a time to set Wilmington education on a new and different path. To do that, we should reduce the forces that divide our efforts, and eliminate the barriers to high-quality public education for all Wilmington students. Anything less will continue to compromise the lives of our children and diminish the prospects for both Wilmington and Delaware.

An Action Agenda

In September 2014, Governor Jack Markell, with encouragement from members of Wilmington's state legislative delegation, specifically Representatives Charles Potter, Stephanie Bolden, and James "J.J." Johnson, and Senator Margaret Rose Henry, formed the Wilmington Educational Advisory Committee (WEAC). The Advisory Committee's mandate is to recommend how to strengthen the public education system for *all* Wilmington students. Governor Markell charged the Advisory Committee with addressing the underlying challenges facing public education in Wilmington, and proposing actions that will propel continuous improvements in Wilmington schools.

The Advisory Committee includes a diverse representation of the Wilmington community, including educators, parents, advocates, and community activists. While diverse, we have approached our work with shared expectations and agreement on guiding principles. While our focus is Wilmington, we believe these principles should apply across Delaware.

The effectiveness of Wilmington public education is critical to our entire state; strengthening Wilmington public education will strengthen Delaware.

- All Wilmington schools should set and meet high standards for student learning and there should be agreed upon measures for student success that apply to all schools.
- Wilmington students should continue to be served by a combination of district, charter, and vo-tech schools.
- All Wilmington schools should receive the human and financial resources needed to support student success.
- Policies and practices for Wilmington schools should promote collaboration, shared learning, and a mutual commitment to improvements that serve all students.
- Wilmington schools should be supported as community assets, governed in some way by the community it serves.
- Wilmington schools must have allies to address the complex challenges of educating the city's children. These allies include engaged families, community and business partners, early childhood educators, mental and physical health providers, institutions of higher education, and service providers from all levels of government and from the private and nonprofit sectors.

The Advisory Committee has met with state and local government officials, including the Wilmington delegation of the General Assembly as well as legislators from other parts of New Castle County, the leaders of the House and Senate education committees, Wilmington's Mayor and City Council President and several members of Wilmington and New Castle County Council. We also have met with some state and district education officials and intend to expand those conversations as our work continues.

The Advisory Committee reviewed the work of earlier commissions addressing the challenges of Wilmington education: the Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee, 2001²; the Wilmington Hope Commission, 2006³; the Wilmington Education Task Force, 2008⁴; and the Mayor's Youth, Education and Citizenship Strategic Planning Team, 2013. These commissions arrived at similar recommendations for strengthening Wilmington education. With few exceptions, those recommendations have never been acted upon. We find great value in the work of these earlier commissions and we have sought to build upon their analysis and recommendations. Our deliberations also have been framed by the longer history of Wilmington education, particularly the implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Beyond this, we have considered changes in conditions since 2001, when the first of the earlier commission reports on Wilmington education was issued.

The Advisory Committee has focused upon promoting the long-term best interests of students. As such, we have avoided alignment with or criticism of the aforementioned contending interests and institutions that now characterize Wilmington education. Instead, we have developed an "action agenda" around which a broad-based community coalition can rally: parents, teachers, principals, district officials, business and community leaders, elected officials, and concerned citizens in Wilmington and across Delaware. Before the action agenda is finalized and presented to Governor Markell and the General Assembly in March, we will solicit input from the broader Delaware community, and especially the families, citizens, and leaders of Wilmington. Our intention is to utilize community comment and suggestions to further elaborate and refine the recommendations in our final report (see **Opportunity for Public Comments** section for details). We call on all Delawareans to join this dialogue and to do so with a constructive spirit that will help to generate common commitment to an action agenda.

The Advisory Committee has focused on issues of governance, resources, and meeting the distinctive needs of Wilmington children. These are matters of broad and urgent community concern, and they influence many other factors impacting the effectiveness of Wilmington public education. We believe this is an appropriate focus for a committee representative of a cross-section of the Wilmington community. We recognize that there are many other factors impacting Wilmington education, such as the content of the curriculum, the organizational and instructional practices within our schools, and the quality and performance of school leaders and other educators. These factors should be addressed but they are beyond the scope of our review.

For this interim report, we have distilled our analysis into a compact form. Our objective now is to obtain comment on our overall action agenda in four areas: 1) Creating Responsive Governance; 2) Meeting Wilmington Student Needs; 3) Funding Student Success; and, 4) Implementing Change.

² Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee. (2001, January 01). They matter most: Investing in Wilmington's children and Delaware's future.

³ Wilmington Hope Commission. (2006, March). Hope Commission: A Wilmington plan.

⁴ The Wilmington Education Task Force (2008, April). Report of the Wilmington Education Task Force.

Creating Responsive Governance

Strengthening Wilmington education requires more coherent and responsive governance of Wilmington public schools. Improved governance will not solve all the problems facing public education in Wilmington, but it should be the starting point. Without changing the governance of Wilmington public education, all other improvements will be made more difficult or simply not possible. This has been the conclusion of every working group focused on Wilmington education since 2001. All have proposed the need to create a system of governance that is streamlined, more responsive to the needs of Wilmington's children and their families, and more deeply connected with the community that it serves. A range of proposals has been offered—from district consolidation to the creation of a Wilmington charter district—but none has been implemented. Indeed, the fragmentation of Wilmington public education governance has become more acute.

Table 1: Schools Located within City of Wilmington Limits, Fall 2015

| District | Elementary | Middle | High |
|--|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Brandywine | Harlan Elementary School | P.S. duPont Middle School | N/A |
| Christina | Bancroft Elementary School Elbert-Palmer Elementary School Pulaski Elementary School Stubbs Elementary School | Bayard Middle School | N/A |
| Colonial | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Red Clay Consolidated | Delaware College Preparatory Academy** Highlands Elementary School Lewis Dual Language Elementary School Shortlidge Academy Warner Elementary School | Cab Calloway School of the Arts* | Cab Calloway School of the Arts* Charter School of Wilmington** |
| NCC Vo-tech | N/A | N/A | Howard High School of Technology |
| State-Authorized Charter Schools (Grade Levels Vary) | | | |
| Delaware Design Lab High School**** East Side Charter School Edison Charter School First State Montessori Academy Freire Charter School*** Great Oaks Charter School*** Kuumba Academy La Academia Antonia Alonso Odyssey Charter School Prestige Academy The Delaware MET*** | | | |

Notes: Independent governing units are bolded. This table does not include alternative schools located in the city.

Moyer Academic Institute and Reach Academy for Girls are not included, as they are proposed for closure.

*Magnet School

** Charter schools authorized by Red Clay Consolidated School District

*** New schools approved to open in Fall 2015

**** New schools approved to open in Fall 2015, may change planned location

Source: Delaware Department of Education. (2014). School Profiles.

By the fall of 2015, responsibility for the governance of Wilmington public education will be divided among four traditional school districts, one vo-tech district, and thirteen charter schools, each separately governed (see **Table 1**). These 18 independent governing units do not include the Delaware Department of Education and the State Board of Education, both of which have mandated oversight roles in public education governance. The groups that are not included among the governing units of Wilmington public education, however, are the community it serves and the city government that represents that community. Neither has a formal role in the governance of the schools that educate their children.

The fragmentation of governance responsibilities is no accident. State and federal policies and practices, some four decades old, have created and sustained this condition (see **Wilmington Education Historical Timeline** on page ii). Some of these policies and practices also encourage competition and displacement among district, vo-tech, and charter schools rather than collaboration and mutual commitment to improvements for all Wilmington schools. As a result, Wilmington now has an arrangement of public education in which traditional districts, a vo-tech district, and charter schools operate as largely disconnected subsystems, funded at rising public expense but with no acceptance of shared responsibility for the education of all Wilmington students.

Even within the charter and district subsystems, cooperation, collaboration, and shared learning are the exceptions rather than the norm. Indeed, the operation of this system has become increasingly fractious, as evidenced by the recent dialogue about Wilmington education. Even when the dialogue is civil, it is typically incident-driven and not accompanied by any vision of how the complex arrangement of districts and charters will ultimately result in a stronger public education system for all Wilmington students.

Wilmington children can no longer afford to pay the price for this fractured, disconnected, and increasingly dysfunctional system. Wilmington teachers and other educators should not have to work in this contentious and unsupportive environment. Wilmington citizens and Delaware taxpayers should not be expected to pay the rising costs—social as well as financial—of maintaining such a system.

Strengthening the governance of Wilmington public education requires actions on three fronts.

1. Traditional school districts operating in Wilmington should have a more streamlined configuration that better supports continuous improvement and community responsiveness.
2. Charter schools should be guided by a new vision of responsibility for the overall effectiveness of public education that promotes shared capacity, collaboration, and best practices among all Wilmington schools.
3. The Wilmington community and its city government should be engaged partners in the governance of Wilmington public education.

Reconfiguring Wilmington School Districts

The configuration of the four traditional school districts with split responsibilities for Wilmington students is a product of a forty-year-old court decision to achieve metropolitan school desegregation. State policies, specifically the development of options to promote charters and choice (1996) and the Neighborhood Schools Act (2000)⁵, have overtaken the original rationale for this configuration. Wilmington students were expected to benefit from this configuration, which includes one of only four discontinuous districts among the 14,000 districts in the nation. In fact, Wilmington students have experienced—and still experience—the greatest burden from this configuration.

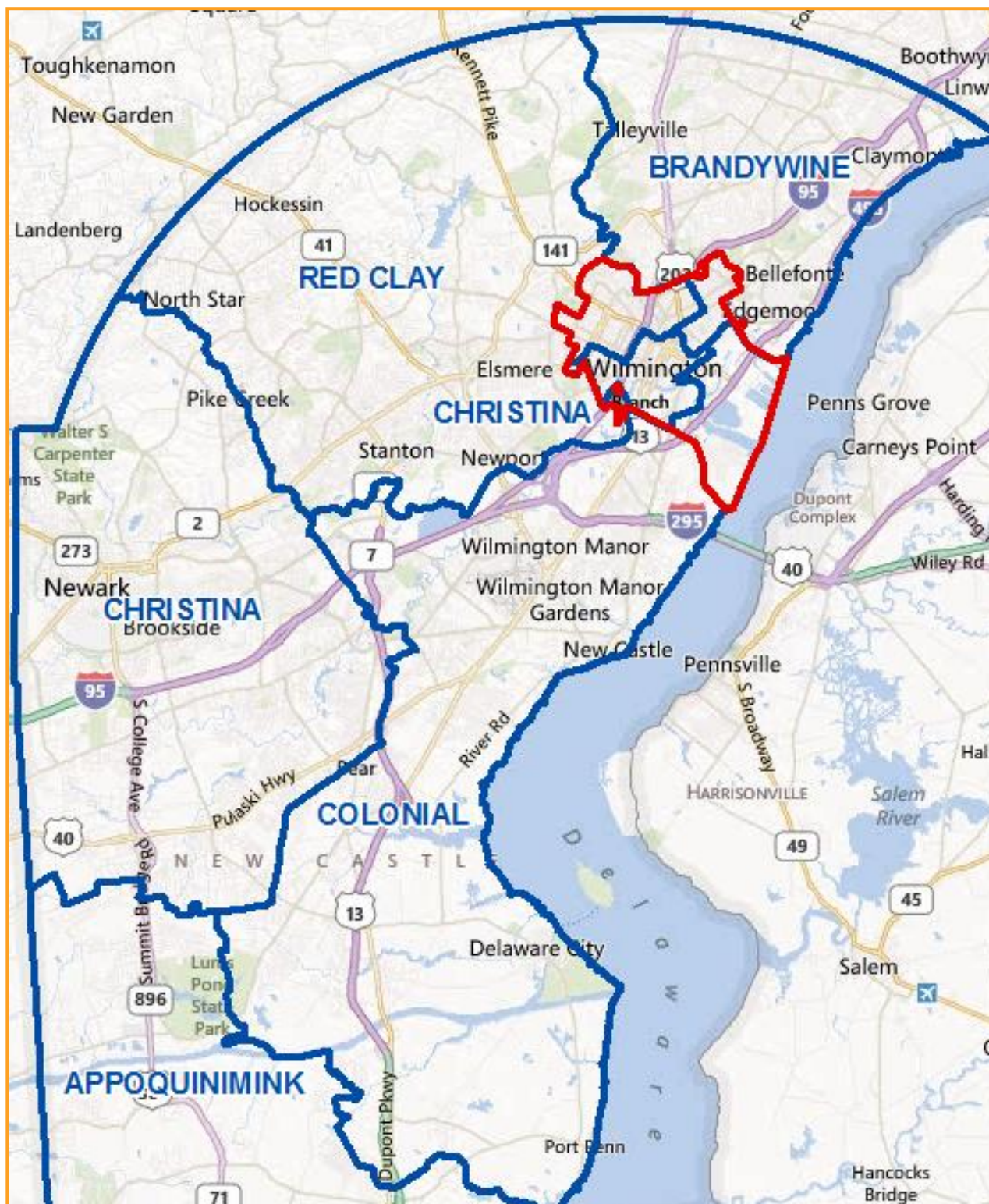
Wilmington has been divided as a community, the role of schools as community assets has been diminished, and the largest city in our state has no traditional public high school within its boundaries. Most important, the current configuration does not effectively address the acute educational challenges faced by many Wilmington students. Indeed, the split of responsibilities makes addressing those challenges more difficult. The citizens and families of the city are not well-served by a disconnected arrangement of school governance that makes their own engagement with education more cumbersome—and often beyond their practical reach.

As a community, Wilmington does not benefit from a public education governance structure built around four districts, none of which has a primary responsibility for the education of Wilmington's children.

The current arrangement of district responsibilities for Wilmington continues largely as a result of inertia. No member of the Advisory Committee believes that this arrangement is in the best interest of Wilmington's children. All believe that strengthening the education of Wilmington's children requires a reconfiguration of district responsibilities. This is the same conclusion that has been reached by every task force that has looked at this issue since 2001.

⁵ Neighborhood Schools Act of 2000, 72 Del. Laws, c.287 §2 (2000).
School Choice Act of 1996, 70 Del. Laws, c.180 §3 (1996).
Charter School Act of 1995, 70 Del. Laws, c.179 §5 (1996).

Figure 1: City of Wilmington District Map



Source: Delaware Department of Education. (2014). GIS Mapping.

Evaluating Alternatives

In evaluating alternatives to the current district configuration, the Advisory Committee recognizes that many factors must be considered. Any solution to the fragmentation of districts in Wilmington will have impacts and implications for students and families in other parts of New Castle County. A change in configuration also will generate transition costs. Most important, any proposal for district reconfiguration must contribute to the overall coherence and responsiveness of public education governance over the long term; it must offer a lasting and stable outcome.

A recommended proposal must meet the following objectives:

- **Streamline governance by reducing the number of districts operating in Wilmington**
- **Increase overall responsiveness of district governance to community priorities**
- **Maintain the funding base supporting Wilmington district schools, with transitional funding to support district reconfiguration**
- **Strengthen capacity for collaboration among districts and charters**
- **Reduce the burdens of district fragmentation experienced by Wilmington students**
- **Provide benefits and mitigate disruptions for students and families across New Castle County**

Viewed against these objectives, some options that may seem attractive in principle are not viable in practice. The creation of a Wilmington School District defined by the geographic boundaries of the city is not viable. The 2001 Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee and others thereafter have agreed that this option poses an unacceptable trade-off. While a Wilmington district would increase local control and community responsiveness, it also would result in fewer resources and diminished capacity to meet the needs of Wilmington students. Such a reconfiguration also would solidify educational segregation and further isolate Wilmington's high-needs students.

The combination of some, or all, existing districts to form a Metropolitan School District that serves the students in all of New Castle County also is impractical. The overall consolidation of the four school districts, while desirable on a number of grounds, would be disruptive for students and families across New Castle County and would likely be resisted politically at every level. Further, such a district would not increase the responsiveness of governance to Wilmington community needs—or the needs of other communities in New Castle County. Indeed, the single district solution for northern New Castle County was the original court-proposed remedy for metropolitan desegregation over forty years ago. It was soon replaced by the four-district organization still in place today. Over the long term, as part of a plan for statewide redistricting, a single

metropolitan district for northern New Castle County may be an option to consider. It is not feasible at this time, and focusing on this option would likely lead to a political stalemate, with no action taken to alleviate the current fragmentation of governance.

Converting all Wilmington schools to charter schools authorized by a newly created Wilmington Charter District is neither desirable on educational grounds nor practical on political grounds. Charter schools are playing a central and growing role in Wilmington public education. However, Wilmington children require the full array of educational options that is possible only with a continued reliance on district, charter, and vo-tech schools.

The Advisory Committee believes that the district reconfiguration recommended below would best meet the objectives.

Action Agenda

- 1. The Christina School District should no longer serve Wilmington students. The current configuration of the Christina School District has no educational rationale other than the inertia of a forty-year-old decision that no longer serves the function for which it was originally intended. The Christina School District should concentrate on serving students in Newark and other communities in western New Castle County. In that proposed configuration, it will be more responsive to the needs of the students in those communities. Wilmington students currently served by Christina schools outside of Wilmington should continue to attend those schools until a comprehensive relocation plan can be developed and implemented. Transitional funding adjustments will be needed to implement this reconfiguration** (see section on **Funding Student Success** on page 25).
- 2. The Colonial School District, which has no school facilities in the City of Wilmington, should no longer serve Wilmington students. Students currently enrolled would continue to be served until a relocation plan can be developed and implemented. Transitional funding adjustments will be needed to implement this change** (see section on **Funding Student Success** on page 25).
- 3. Two school districts, Red Clay and Brandywine, should continue to serve Wilmington children. Red Clay should take responsibility for all of the Wilmington schools currently under the Christina School District and for Wilmington students currently served by the Colonial School District. This expanded role for Red Clay is desirable for several reasons. Red Clay already has a core role in the city and operates as a metropolitan school district. Red Clay also has a plan for addressing the challenges of some of the city's priority schools. It makes sense for all priority schools to be part of a single plan. Red Clay is the only district in the state with direct experience in authorizing and working with charter schools, and that experience should enable Red Clay to be effective in collaborating with the growing number of charter schools in Wilmington. Red Clay's role in bridging traditional and charter schools is critical to the long-term coherence and stability of public education governance in Wilmington. The proposed expansion of Red Clay's responsibilities carries with it an expectation that the district will play a leadership role in the overall improvement of**

Wilmington public education. The key to that leadership role is achieving greater student success in schools with high concentrations of poverty. The district should affirm its commitment to that objective, and should be supported in fulfilling that commitment by the state and all sectors of the Wilmington and New Castle County communities.

- 4. The New Castle County Vocational-Technical School District (NCC Vo-tech) should play a critical role in collaborating with the Red Clay Consolidated and Brandywine School Districts and with the Wilmington charter schools. We recommend the development of joint programs among NCC Vo-tech, district high schools, Wilmington charter high schools, and Delaware Technical Community College to facilitate coordinated pathways for students from all high schools to employment opportunities and advanced technical training.**

Planning for the implementation of these recommended changes should begin immediately (see section on **Implementing Change** on page 28).

Pursuing a New Vision for Wilmington Charter Schools⁶

Charter schools are now an important component of Wilmington education, and they will become even more important in the years ahead. In 2012, Delaware ranked third among states in the percentage of public school students enrolled in charters. In that year over 10,300 students were enrolled, and over 8.9% of Delaware's total public school enrollment. Delaware's heaviest and most rapidly growing concentration of charters is in Wilmington, with 13 (see **Table 1**). Nearly two-thirds of total state charter enrollment is generated by students living within three public school districts. Based on DOE data from 2012, charter enrollments account for 13.1% of students in Christina, 8.9% in Colonial, and 8.5% in Red Clay⁷. With additional Wilmington charter schools already authorized, these percentages will continue to grow. Over the next five years, charter enrollment capacity is projected to increase from 2,094 to 2,757 for elementary schools, from 571 to 1,214 for middle schools, and from 970 to 2,946 for high schools. Total charter capacity in Wilmington is projected to increase by over 90%, from 3,635 to 6,917 (see **Figure 2**). This increased capacity may not be filled and students from outside Wilmington undoubtedly will fill some seats. Even so, the anticipated growth of charter school enrollments influences the overall configuration of public education in the city and New Castle County.

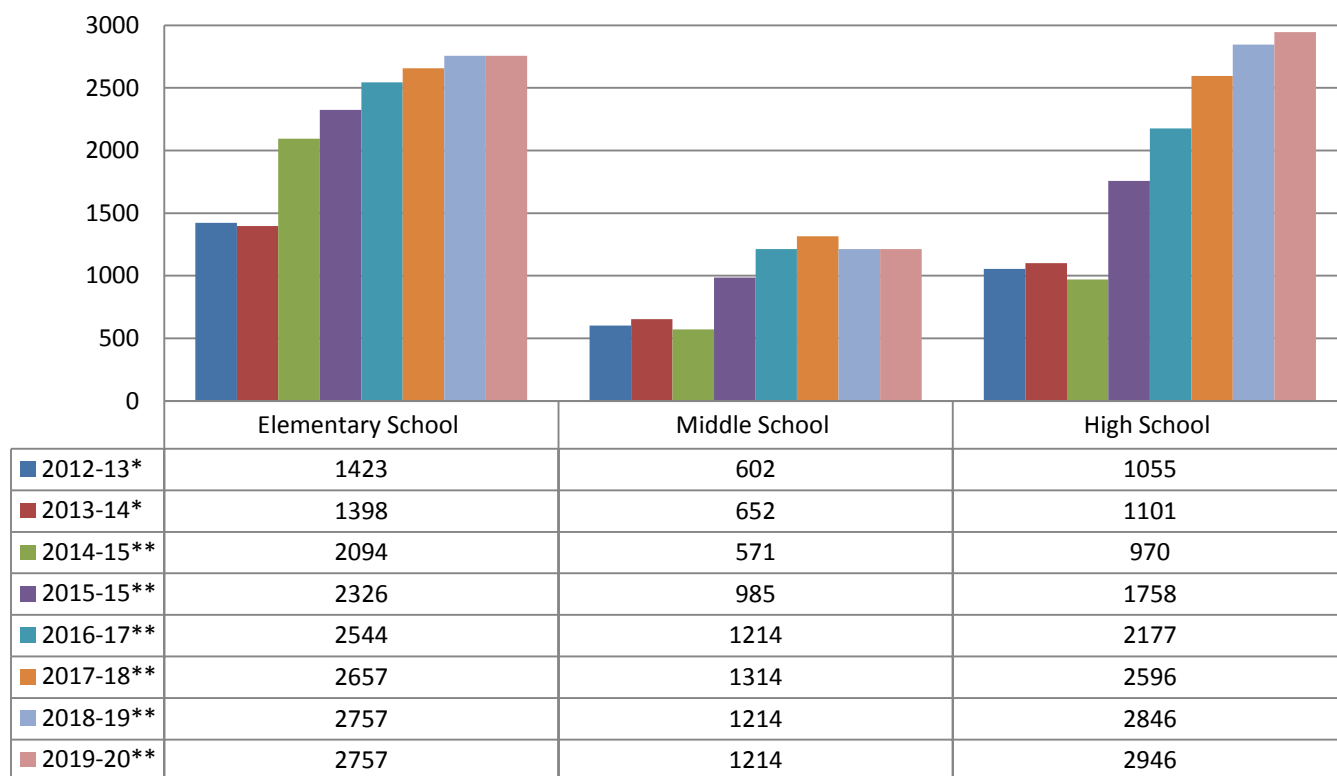
Charter schools offer a wider range of options for Wilmington families who know about them. They also pose challenges for the governance of Wilmington public education. The increasing number of charter schools in Wilmington has generated additional governing units that operate largely independent of one another and disconnected from the traditional districts. Indeed, Wilmington charter schools have developed as a separate public education system, occupying the same geographic space as the traditional school

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, data cited in this section are from Delaware Charter School Data, Institute for Public Administration, 2013.
www.ipa.udel.edu/publications/charter_school_data_delaware-2013.pdf
www.ipa.udel.edu/publications/CharterPublicHearingPresentation.pdf

⁷ Percentage attending charter who reside within the district

districts but operating disconnected from those districts. At times, charters operate as if their role is to displace rather than improve the larger public education system. At the same time, most Delaware school districts have operated in a comparably detached and, at times, dismissive fashion with regard to charters. Rather than promoting market competition that strengthens performance and responsiveness, this competition is pursued at public expense and dissipates the capacity for overall improvement. The sum is less than the parts. To date, there have been few sustained collaborations between charter schools and traditional school districts, a condition that stands in sharp contrast to the operation and expectations of charters and traditional schools in most of the nation.

Figure 2: Projected Charter Enrollment Capacity in Wilmington by School Level



Notes: (1) Enrollment does not come exclusively from students who live in the city. (2) Analysis follows approved modifications and new charters opening in 2015. (3) Projections for new charters and modifications assume enrollment at capacity as indicated. (4) Existing schools without a modification are assumed static. (5) Does not include charter school openings under discussion or proposed past the 2015 school year. (6) *Actual Data **Projected Figure

Source: University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, 2014

Evaluating Alternatives

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) calls upon all charter authorizers to have a compelling vision for charter development, clear goals, and a plan for accomplishing those goals.⁸ NACSA also works with authorizers to develop such a strategic plan. The State of Delaware is the primary authorizer for all but three charter schools and it has no plan for the desired number of charters, the distribution of

⁸ See National Association of Charter School Authorizers website, www.qualitycharters.org/authorizer-development/what-we-do.html

charters, or the total enrollments or grade levels they should serve. There is no plan for the desired mix of charters, traditional public schools, vo-techs, and private schools in the state or in Wilmington. The absence of such a plan impacts most dramatically on Wilmington.

The emerging numbers, types, and locations of charters have been driven almost entirely by discrete and disconnected decisions on each separate charter application. Applications have been considered and some approved without any assessment of whether the new charter school will strengthen the overall system of public education. Indeed, until last year, decisions about charter schools were being made without any evaluation of the cumulative community impact of those decisions. Some assessment is now part of the review process. Even so, the State is still making decisions about particular charter applications without any overall plan for what the sum of those decisions is expected to accomplish for the overall delivery of public education. In this, as in other areas, Delaware remains an outlier to national best practices for the development of charter schools.

Across America, charter schools are intended to encourage creative school environments and innovative teaching and learning methods. Central to the rationale for charters is their anticipated role as demonstration schools, with the expectation that successful innovations will be shared and adopted by other charters as well as traditional public schools. In most of the nation, this is exactly what is expected and what takes place. Nationally, almost 90% of charter schools are authorized by local school districts. This structure helps to foster communication, coordination, and collaboration between charters and traditional schools. In Delaware, however, about 90% of charters are authorized by the State of Delaware. Red Clay is the only school district that has authorized charter schools even though all school districts are eligible to be charter authorizers. In Delaware, the role of charter schools in encouraging innovation rarely translates to a demonstration and scaling up of best practices. While there is sharing across some charters, it generally involves a small number of charters and not all of those that might benefit. Sharing between state-authorized charters and traditional districts is virtually nonexistent.

The starting point for improvements is the recognition that charter schools are an important part of public education in Wilmington and will become even more important in the decades ahead. Precisely because of their importance, it is critical that they operate in ways that support the overall improvement of public education.

Delaware and Wilmington require a new vision of the role and responsibilities of charter schools framed by a state plan, grounded in national best practices, and focused on sharing effective educational innovations and practices with all public schools. That new vision should be matched with the creation of a new entity that actively supports initiatives to fulfill this vision.

Action Agenda

- 1. Governor Markell should mandate the Delaware Department of Education and State Board of Education to produce a strategic plan for the development of charters that includes the desired number and mix of charter, district, and vo-tech schools statewide, but with an immediate focus in Wilmington and New Castle County where charter growth has been most extensive. The state plan for the development of charters should be based on a systematic evaluation of the educational needs of Delaware students, with an immediate focus on Wilmington students. The plan should comply with NACSA guidelines for best practices and align with the desired overall configuration of the public education system, including fiscal considerations, as defined by the governor and state legislature. The plan should be updated every five years and should be supported by analysis of the impacts of existing Delaware charter schools on the overall effectiveness of Delaware public education.**
- 2. The following steps should be completed before any new charter school or expansion of an existing charter school is authorized in Wilmington and New Castle County.**
 - The recommended changes in governance (applying to both districts and charter schools) have been implemented.
 - The State has produced a strategic plan for the developing charters that includes a proposed optimal mix of district, charter, and vo-tech schools in Wilmington and New Castle County.
 - The charter application has undergone a full analysis of its alignment with the state strategic plan, including an assessment of the impact on the Wilmington and New Castle County communities.
 - The Department of Education confirms that it has sufficient capacity to provide oversight for additional charter schools.
 - The State Board of Education and Department of Education can demonstrate that the charter approval will generate a net benefit for the overall system of public education in Wilmington and New Castle County.
- 3. Given that most Wilmington charters operate outside of school districts, an institutional arrangement needs to be established through which coordination of efficient and effective services and sustained collaboration on best practices is supported and delivered. The governor and state legislature, with the endorsement of the Wilmington city government, should establish and support a Wilmington Charter Consortium to promote the effective coordination of charter operations and the use of best practices. All charter schools in the City of Wilmington authorized by the state should be members of the Consortium, represented by the heads of school, with district-authorized charter heads invited to collaborate. The Wilmington Charter Consortium should focus on**
 - Providing administrative support services (such as business operations and shared provision of non-academic services)
 - Coordinating professional development for charter boards, leaders, and teachers

- **Promoting program collaborations to expand best practices among charters and between charters and Wilmington school districts**
- **Conducting ongoing liaison with the leaders of Wilmington school districts, including the NCC Vo-tech**
- **Engaging the Wilmington city government as a partner (The City of Wilmington should have a liaison from the new Office of Education and Public Policy appointed to work with the Consortium.)**

The leadership of the Consortium should be elected from among the heads of the charter schools. Initially, the Consortium should be launched and operated as an extension of the proposed State Commission for Wilmington Education Improvement (see section on **Implementing Change on page 28), with the expectation that it will develop into an autonomous institution. Some charter schools already benefit from support provided by the Delaware Charter School Network and Innovative Schools. We expect this to continue and to be coordinated with the work of the Consortium. Initial funding for the Consortium should be provided by the State of Delaware as well as from private sources. Members of the Consortium should develop a long-term resource plan.**

Strengthening the Role of the Wilmington Community

Effective public education in Wilmington requires the active engagement of the community it serves and the city government that represents that community. The reconfiguring of districts and creation of the Wilmington Charter Consortium should be accompanied by a new and meaningful partnership with the Wilmington community. Responsive governance requires the ongoing participation of the community and city government in both district and charter school decisions impacting the education of Wilmington's children.

We endorse the Wilmington city government's plans to enhance its capacity to become more systematically engaged in public education. A step in this direction is the creation of an Office of Education and Public Policy within the city government with both the mandate and the resources needed to represent the interests of its community in the process of strengthening Wilmington education. That office should play a leadership role for broad-based community involvement in public education. The office should forge strong partnerships with the reconfigured schools districts and with the Wilmington Charter Consortium. The office may also become the point of initiative for the recently proposed Wilmington Education Alliance that would engage all city stakeholders in the active support of public education.

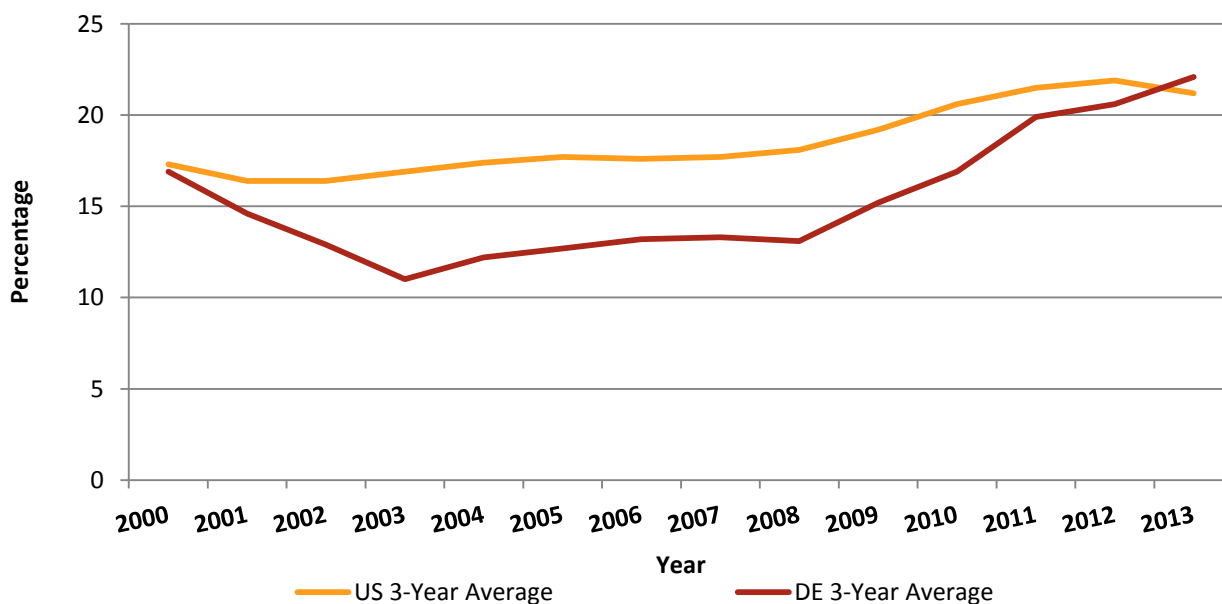
Action Agenda

- 1. The Advisory Committee endorses the plan of the Wilmington city government to create an Office of Education and Public Policy to promote active engagement in public education issues by the Wilmington community. The Office should support the continuous improvement of education for Wilmington students.**
- 2. In the proposed new configuration, the Red Clay Consolidated, Brandywine, and NCC Vo-Tech School Districts should work closely with the Office of Education and Public Policy and the new Wilmington Education Alliance. The boards of the Red Clay Consolidated and Brandywine School Districts should both be expanded to include additional members from the City of Wilmington.**
- 3. The Wilmington Charter Consortium should become a key vehicle for community partnership, working with the proposed Office of Education and Public Policy and the Wilmington Education Alliance to engage the Wilmington community in its deliberations and decisions. The Consortium should participate in the overall planning and development of the city's educational programs and services.**

Meeting Wilmington Student Needs

All previous working groups on Wilmington education, beginning with the 2001 report, *They Matter Most: Investing in Wilmington's Children and Delaware's Future*, have highlighted the unique needs of students in poverty and the challenges facing schools with concentrated poverty. The 2001 report summarizes the challenges by pointing out that low-income children in high-poverty schools (schools with more than 40% low-income students), perform worse academically, read less, have lower attendance rates, are more likely to have serious developmental delays and untreated health problems, have higher rates of student behavior problems, and experience a lack of family involvement. Students in schools with lower concentrations of poverty do not face these challenges to the same extent. The 2001 working group and those after have called for actions to address the needs of schools with high concentrations of students in poverty.

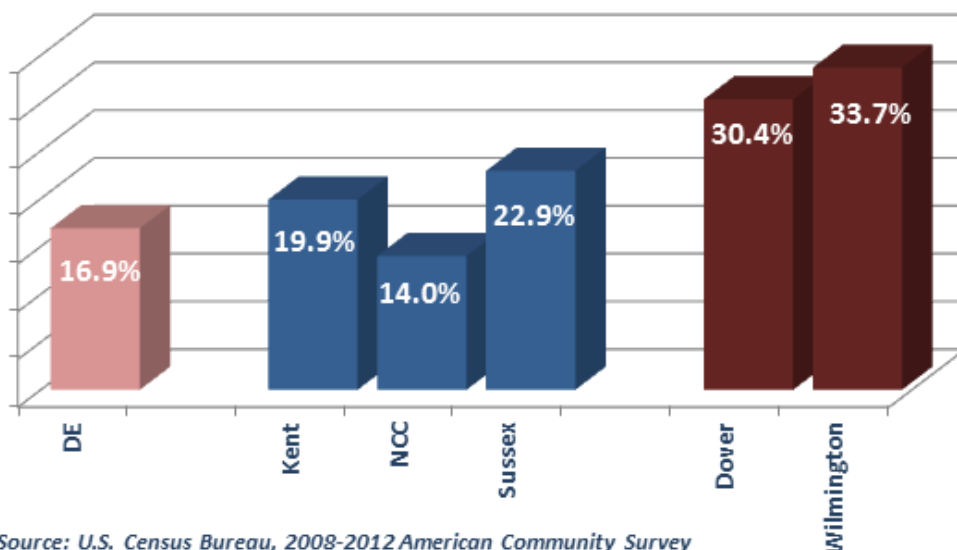
Figure 3: State of Delaware Children in Poverty, 2000–2013



Source: Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research, University of Delaware. (2015).

Since the 2001 report was issued, the condition of poverty among Delaware children in general—and Wilmington children in particular—has become more acute and far more widespread. The percentage of Delaware children in poverty has gone from a low of about 10% in 2003 to about 23% in 2013 (see **Figure 3**). This increase in child poverty is occurring statewide. Some areas in southern Delaware are experiencing soaring numbers of children and families in poverty. However, the highest concentration of children and families in poverty is in Wilmington, with over a third of school-age children in poverty (see **Figure 4**). Considered in the context of child poverty throughout New Castle County (see **Figure 5**), the high concentrations in Wilmington are even more apparent.

Figure 4: Delaware Child Poverty by County and Place, Five-Year Average, 2008–2012

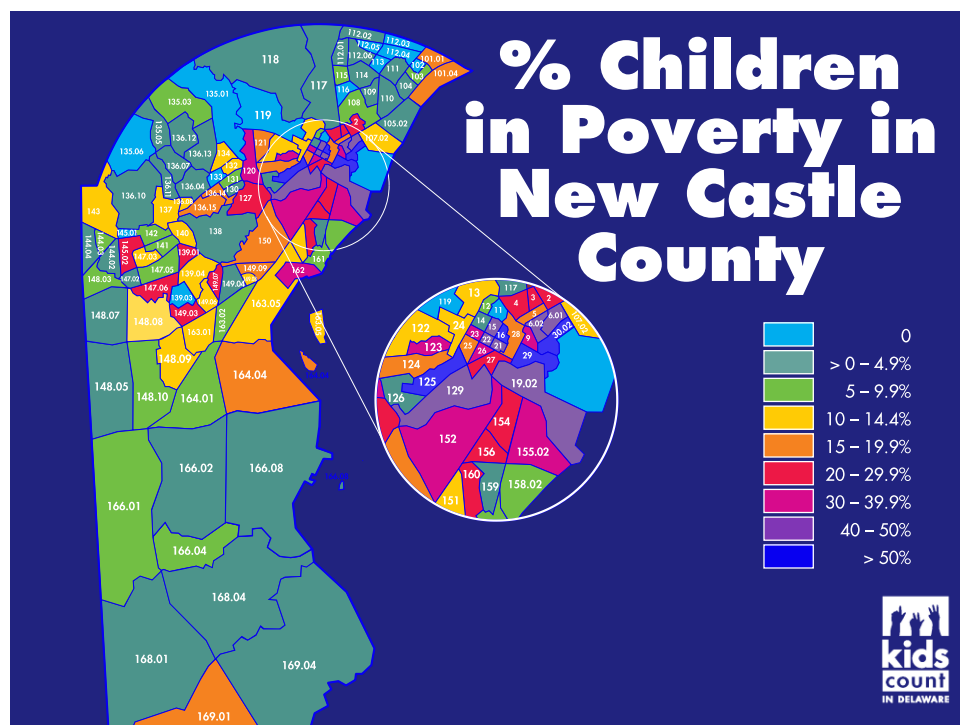


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

Note: The official poverty rate is calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau based on income thresholds and family structure and size.

Source: University of Delaware's Center for Community Research and Service. (2014).

Figure 5: Map Showing the Percentage of Children Ages 0–18 in Poverty by Census Tract in New Castle County, Five-Year Average, 2008–2012

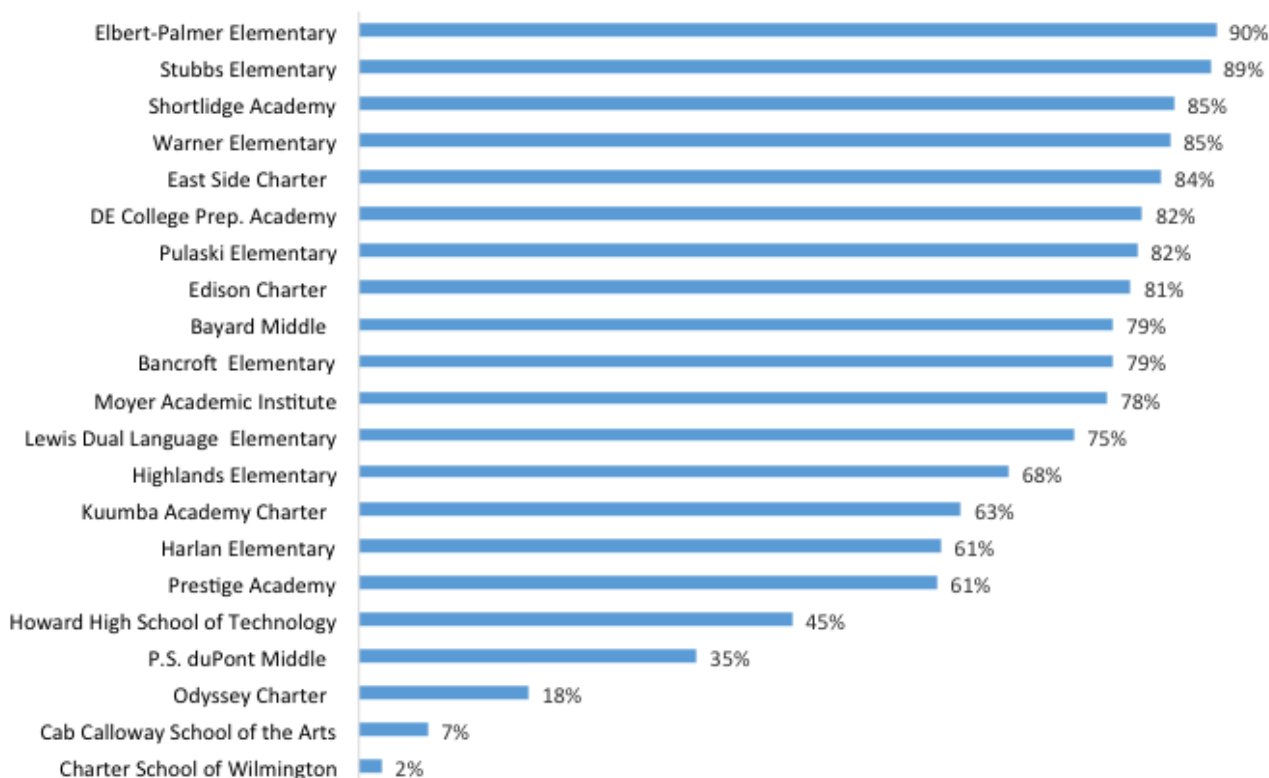


Note: A person is "in poverty" if they reside in a family with income below the U.S. poverty threshold, as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

Source: Kids Count of Delaware. (2014).

The concentrations of children in poverty in Delaware and Wilmington public schools are even higher than in the general population with over 50% of Delaware school children now in poverty.⁹ **Figure 6** lists the City of Wilmington schools ranked by percentage of low-income students determined by if a student receives either Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This definition is different from the poverty definition used in **Figures 3, 4, and 5**.

Figure 6: Percentage of Low Income Enrollment in Wilmington Schools in 2014



Source: Delaware Department of Education. (2014). *School Profiles*.

The relationship between poverty and education is complex. On the one hand, education has long been recognized as the pathway out of poverty and for some Wilmington students this is the case. On the other hand, poverty—in all the dimensions that accompany life in low-income families and neighborhoods—is the most dominant force limiting the educational success of many children. The relationships among education, poverty, and race are critical to the prospects of growing numbers of Delaware children and the communities in which they live. This is the case for Wilmington.

⁹ Layton, L. (2015, January 16). Majority of U.S. public school students are in poverty. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved January 20, 2015, from www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/majority-of-us-public-school-students-are-in-poverty/2015/01/15/df7171d0-9ce9-11e4-a7ee-526210d665b4_story.html

The Advisory Committee affirms that the poverty of children and families should never be used as an excuse to justify the poor performance of schools they attend. We also affirm that schools with high concentrations of students in poverty face challenges not present in schools with more prosperous students. We concur with earlier working groups that students in poverty, regardless of whether they attend schools with high or low test scores, have unique needs that require resources far in excess of what typically is required for more prosperous students. These resources are needed to address the developmental needs and socio-emotional demands on children in poverty. Children in poverty in Wilmington often face particularly harsh circumstances because their environment imposes burdens upon them that extend far beyond the limits of their family's income. Some of these burdens are the conditions of violence and instability experienced at home and in their neighborhoods. Other factors include institutionalized racism and classism, high unemployment rates, lack of "livable wage" work, lack of sufficient safe and affordable housing, food insecurity, pervasive stereotypes about children of color who live in poverty, and the underfunding of educational and social supports designed to address these traumas. For students in extreme poverty, the traumas of their lives are carried with them every day at school, and most schools are not equipped to deal with them.

The achievement gap between poor and more prosperous children is created even before those children arrive at school. Fully 90% of brain growth occurs in the first five years of life.¹⁰ If student learning falls behind in those early years, it is very difficult and sometimes impossible to compensate later. Earlier reports on Wilmington education have consistently identified investment in early learning programs as critical. This is one area in which there has been action by Delaware's leaders, and the impacts of those actions are beginning to materialize. Five years ago, Governor Markell and the Delaware General Assembly undertook policy changes that have greatly increased the access of low-income children to higher quality early learning environments. The number of high-quality programs (Star rating 3 or above) has increased dramatically, with a significant portion of that increase in Wilmington.¹¹ The State is implementing the Early Learner Survey for all incoming Delaware Kindergarten students enabling teachers to better determine the needs of their students and better evaluate the areas for further improvement in early learning. Comparable policy changes are needed in many areas that could positively impact the lives of children in poverty and help provide the broader support needed for the schools in which those students enroll.

Addressing these challenges requires a developmental approach that focuses on the alignment of needed supports and services starting in early childhood (or prenatal care) and extending through entry into a career or higher education. Alignment of supports and services requires a strong partnership between the community and its schools. All sectors of the community should be mobilized. Existing services provided by public, private, and nonprofit institutions should be more effectively (and efficiently) integrated at each stage of child

¹⁰ Sustaining Early Success: Delaware's Strategic Plan for A Comprehensive Early Childhood System, Delaware Early Childhood Council, 2013

¹¹ Delaware Stars for Early Success. (2014, June). Quarterly Report for April - June 2014. Retrieved January 22, 2015 from <http://www.delawarestars.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Monthly-Data-Report-September-2014.pdf>

development and in the transition from one stage to another. The range of services needed includes access to high-quality early childhood education; expanded school time and attention (including enhanced in-school services, such as school psychologists and social workers); availability of after-school programs; expanded school-to-work partnership programs; and, more concerted efforts to reach and engage families in student learning and connect them to available services and supports.

Simply adding services without alignment and integration would be costly and ineffective. A systemic change is needed, and our recommendations focus on the starting points for that change, beginning with a comprehensive implementation plan. The plan should be the mandated responsibility of the existing State of Delaware Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC), which already has responsibility under the Delaware Code for the coordination and integration of state programs and services, and includes the secretaries of the state Departments of Education; Health and Social Services; and Services for Children, Youth and Their Families as well as the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of the Controller General. The role of IRMC should now be expanded. In addition, the capacity of community institutions across all sectors should be mobilized to support the delivery of support services at each stage of student development. As first steps, our proposals seek to take better advantage of organizations and institutions already in place, including, the Office of Early Learning, Early Childhood Council, and Wilmington Early Childhood Council (which include a wide range of community institutions serving children such as Nemours, United Way of Delaware, Children & Families First), Commission on Early Education and the Economy, Delaware P-20 Council, state Council of Higher Education Presidents, State and New Castle County Chambers of Commerce, and Delaware Business Roundtable.

Action Agenda

1. **The governor and state legislature should mandate the IRMC to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for state and local services, including partnerships with private and nonprofit institutions, which will create a community of support for low-income children and their families. The plan also should address the needs of schools in which large percentages of low-income children enroll. The plan, including initial recommendations for program and policy changes and funding requirements, should be submitted by the IRMC to the governor and state legislature in January 2016. The IRMC also should provide the governor and state legislature with an annual report on the implementation and operation of the plan.**
2. **Recent improvements in early childhood programs should be accelerated. The Early Childhood Council, Office of Early Learning, and Wilmington Early Childhood Council should develop an early childhood community plan for Wilmington that would provide access to high-quality early childhood programs and services for all children. This initiative should align with the state's already approved early childhood strategic plan¹². A key step will be the development of a citywide partnership that includes all providers**

¹² Sustaining Early Success: Delaware's Strategic Plan for a Comprehensive Early Childhood System, Dover, DE: Delaware Early Childhood Council, 2013, p.2.

(family and center-based), Early Head Start, Head Start, school districts, and higher education. This initiative should be supported actively by the Governor's Commission on Early Education and the Economy, with the shared goal of working with providers to establish easily accessible and affordable high-quality services (including needed screenings and interventions to identify and address developmental needs) for all Wilmington children. This initiative should be coordinated with the existing Early Childhood Readiness Teams and should also include a formal partnership among early childhood providers and districts and charters serving Wilmington to facilitate the effective transition of children from early childhood to K–12 education.

3. The governor should re-direct the Delaware P–20 Council, representing Pre-K through higher education, to recommend improvements in the alignment of resources and programs to support student learning and development from birth through access to college and careers. This should include a review of resources and programs from public, private, and nonprofit institutions. There should be a logical progression of learning for students from early childhood to post-secondary education and workforce readiness aimed at reducing the need for remediation at each transition. Improved alignment will benefit all children in Delaware. It will be of particular importance to low-income children who often lack sufficient support for their learning progress. Improved alignment also will strengthen cost-effectiveness in the overall delivery of educational programs and services.
4. The governor should call upon the Council of Higher Education Presidents to create a coordinated and aligned partnership program to help strengthen Wilmington education from early childhood through college access. Delaware higher-education institutions—public and private—that offer teacher or administrator education programs should be asked to develop collaborative models of comprehensive professional development and ongoing training aimed at assisting Wilmington schools with high percentages of low-income students.
5. In collaboration with the State and New Castle County Chambers of Commerce and the Delaware Business Roundtable, the governor should launch a business sponsorship program focused on Wilmington schools with high percentages of low-income students. Business sponsors should work as partners with each school, helping to generate the human, material, and fiscal resources needed to support student success. This type of sponsorship already is present in some schools and it should be available, formalized, and enhanced for all Wilmington schools. Once developed, the business sponsorship program should be expanded statewide for all schools with high percentages of low-income students.
6. The Wilmington Education Alliance, supported by the Office of Education and Public Policy, should play a leadership role in strengthening parent engagement in student learning, beginning in early childhood and extending through college and career choice. The Alliance also should support parent advocacy for students with special needs, and mobilize cross-sector community resources to strengthen the support for low-income families and Wilmington schools with high concentrations of low-income students.

Funding Student Success

All previous working groups have recommended changes in education funding to better support Wilmington schools. The 2001 report, for example, recommended increased funding to address the unique needs of schools with large percentages of low-income students, including funding for higher-quality early childhood programs, special education services, and increased professional time. The report also indicated that the attraction and retention of quality teachers to Wilmington schools requires competitive salaries, well-resourced working conditions, and professional development.¹³ The 2008 report more specifically identified the need for a change in the state's education funding formula, and recommended a weighted student funding system designed to provide enhanced resources for low-income students and schools in which they are concentrated.¹⁴

In our view, the funding issues fall into four categories: 1) an allocation formula for public school operating funds that responds to the added resource needs of schools with high percentages of low-income students; 2) a sufficient revenue base to support the overall rising costs of the public education system; 3) an array of transition and capital resources needed to effectively implement the proposed district realignment; and, 4) an allocation of funding for the additional programs and services, such as high-quality early childhood programs, required to meet the needs of students in poverty.

Significant discussion is underway about whether Delaware should preserve its current public education funding allocation system based on "unit counts," or move to a new student-based foundation system that incorporates a weighted formula based on differential student needs. The Advisory Committee believes that the movement to a new allocation system would provide the best opportunity to fully incorporate the needs of low-income students, particularly those in extreme poverty. Even so, we have framed our recommendations within the existing allocation system on the belief that the funding needed to support Wilmington schools and students should not be dependent on moving to a new funding allocation system.

Our funding recommendations address the underlying revenue base supporting public education. The capacity of the State of Delaware to sustain its share of the increasing revenues needed to fund public education is uncertain. The capacity of local sources to sustain revenues to meet their share of the cost of public education also is in doubt. Without stabilizing and enhancing revenue support at both the state and local levels, changes in the funding formula may be difficult and less effective.

The primary source of revenue for public education at the local level is generated from a property tax based on the assessment value of the property as well as the tax rate. Equitable administration of the property tax requires that property assessments be related to the actual market value of the property. Best practices suggest that the actual market value of

¹³ Wilmington Neighborhood Schools Committee. (2001, January 01). They matter most: Investing in Wilmington's children and Delaware's future.

¹⁴ The Wilmington Education Task Force Study Committee (2008, April). Report of the Wilmington Education Task Force.

properties should be evaluated on a regular schedule. When property assessments are out of date, significant inequities arise between various classes of property (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial) and within each class of property. The counties are currently responsible for maintaining property assessment, and the most recent assessment of market value was 1983 in New Castle County, 1987 in Kent County, and 1974 in Sussex County.¹⁵ While there are many reasons for this lag in assessment, most particularly that the costs of assessment are high and the political opposition to assessment from property owners is significant, the large and growing mismatch between the market value and taxable value of property represents an increasing inequity. This lag renders the state's equalization process, which was intended to compensate for inequities in the tax bases among districts, inaccurate and ineffective. The greatest burden is on the districts that should be the beneficiaries of equalization.

Action Agenda

- 1. The governor and state legislature should approve a modification to the current unit count allocation formula (or move to a new weighted student allocation formula) that addresses the needs of at-risk students by incorporating allocations for schools with high concentrations of students in poverty and English language learners, and expands special education status to grades K–3. Allocations should be applied to multiple enrollment data points/periods to compensate for shifting student populations, and a transition fund should be established to manage the funding impacts of these shifts.**
- 2. The revenue base supporting public education should be strengthened at both the state and local levels. Property reassessment should be implemented without further delay and undertaken on an ongoing schedule that reflects national best practices. Districts should be authorized to increase taxes by a designated percentage without referendum. Districts also should be authorized to apply an equalization surcharge tax that would be redistributed according to the equalization formula to partially redress the lag in equalization. These changes are essential to an effective equalization process.**
- 3. Funding adjustments should be made to support the costs of district reorganization. These include transitional funding for districts during the years in which the affected districts's student populations will be reshaped as a product of mandated reorganization. A needs assessment should be conducted to evaluate whether the remaining districts in Wilmington require new middle and high schools in the city.**
- 4. The General Assembly should approve enabling legislation for the City of Wilmington to increase revenue, subject to approval by the City Council and the Mayor, for the specific support of an Office of Education and Public Policy.**
- 5. The Advisory Committee endorses the increased investment needed and already anticipated to sustain and accelerate advances in early childhood learning and in workforce and college access.**

¹⁵ 2013-2014 Property Tax Report. (2013, September). Delaware Economic Development Office. Retrieved January 20, 2015 from http://dedo.delaware.gov/dedo_pdf/NewsEvents_pdf/publications/DelawarePropertyTaxes_2013_2014.pdf

- 6. The IRMC comprehensive plan for low-income students, families, and schools should incorporate steps for redirecting existing state funding to support implementation. The plan should indicate how existing funding should be redirected to support after school programs, expanded summer programs, and other high impact supports for low-income students and their families. The governor and state legislature should call upon the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (in the Implementing Change on the following page) to work with the IRMC to identify state funding that may be redirected to the implementation of the comprehensive plan.**

Implementing Change

The recommendations of earlier Wilmington education working groups have not been implemented. There are many reasons for the lack of action. One of the most important reasons is the fractured nature of governance responsibilities for public education in Wilmington, which works against the actions needed for its own improvement. Leaving responsibility for implementation to be worked out through the typical operations of the current governance system is a guarantee that little change will occur. While the governor and state legislature ultimately have responsibility for acting on the recommendations provided by the Advisory Committee, their ability to carry out that responsibility over a number of years requires that implementation plans be developed and that the implementation process be monitored and evaluated. These responsibilities should not be left within the existing agencies of state government. A broadly representative, cross-sector commission mandated by the governor and state legislature is required to work with the various governance units to develop and seek approval for the implementation plans and monitor the process of implementation. The mandate to this commission should apply to all recommended changes from this report and to further recommended actions for the continuous improvement of Wilmington public education.

Action Agenda

- 1. The governor and legislature should establish, through the Delaware Code, the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (WEIC). WEIC should serve as the state advisory commission on planning and implementing the recommended changes to improve Wilmington education. WEIC should monitor progress on implementation and recommend additional policy and program improvements to strengthen Wilmington education. WEIC also should advise the governor and legislature on statewide improvements for all schools with high concentrations of children in poverty. Specifically, WEIC should make recommendations to the governor and the legislature that promote the coherent and responsive governance of Wilmington education, the coordination and effective delivery of state and private and nonprofit services for schools with high percentages of children in poverty, and the effective and efficient use of state and local resources to support continuous improvement in Wilmington public education.**
- 2. WEIC should include representatives of state government; Wilmington city government; Wilmington districts and charters; key Wilmington education stakeholders, including parents; and a cross-section of community institutions from all sectors. The chair and vice-chair of WEIC should be appointed from among the private and nonprofit members. The operational support of WEIC should be external to the state Department of Education or other public sector or educational units directly impacted by the implementation of the recommendations. WEIC should issue an annual report to the governor and state legislature describing the progress of implementation and proposals for continuous improvement in Wilmington education. Unless reauthorized, the WEIC should terminate June 30, 2020.**

Opportunity for Public Comments

Contact the Wilmington Education Advisory Committee outreach team for public comment and participation.

Email: wilmingtonschools@gmail.com

Message Box (Google Voice/Text): [\(302\) 385-6206](tel:3023856206)

Feedback Form: <http://bit.ly/wilmschools>

Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/wilmingtonschools/

Meetup Group: www.meetup.com/Solutions-for-Wilmington-Schools/